

REBEL DESTINY

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In the doorway of one of the huts, a woman squatted over a fire, and at her feet a child sat busying itself with pushing the firewood toward the center. Our cook had planted two forked sticks in the ground, and on them had hung our lanterns, so that we could see the woman silhouetted against the fire and the naked child on the ground singing the *seketi* which Bayo had sung for us so many times on the river. Over and over the child tried the air, her mother humming it for her softly, while from the doorway of another house a man sat watching them. We had not noticed him until the lanterns had come. The planting ground at harvest time is not a place a man frequents. He was a strange figure there on his low stool, as he sat wrapped to his neck in a large striped cloth. He made not the slightest move, uttered not a single word. But for his cough, he might have been a corpse propped up in the doorway. We stood hesitating whether to cross the short distance between us and the fire to greet the woman and the man, but before we could come close enough to them to speak, we heard Bayo calling us in a voice we had never heard him use in a strange village.

"Bak'a, Bak'a. Come. They want you inside." When we were out of earshot of the woman at the fire, he said in a whisper, "Do not go over to those houses. Tomorrow when we are away from here, I will tell you why. It is for that I called you."

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We had no need, however, to puzzle over Bayo's warning. Our cook, who had heard the conversation of the men, told us that the man in the doorway was a leper.

"You know how it happens, Massa? Among us townspeople it is this way. A child inherits a *trefu* from his father. It is one thing, or many things, he must not eat. If he eats what he should not, then he sickens. We know a person who has eaten his *trefu* by the spots that come out on his skin. If a man goes on eating the things which are his *trefu*, then the spots become worse and worse. He becomes a leper. So that's how it is."

He did not at once answer the questions we put to him.

THE PROVISION GROUND

"I'll tell you how it is mostly," he went on, after a silence. "Sometimes a woman will lie about the father of her child. The child will grow up keeping the trefu of a strange man. But it won't be his real trefu. His mother, you see, lied about his father. In the end, if nothing is done, this child will be sick, and later he will become a leper. Only a bad woman will lie about her child's father, because only a bad woman will want to hurt her own child. It doesn't happen among the girls who wear kerchiefs and live the way the old people live. These girls dance to the spirits. They are afraid of the ancestors. They are afraid of their *akra*—their soul—and the Earth Mother. But those girls who wear hats—ai, Massa, those girls do anything!"

But here in the bush, it seemed, they had other beliefs about leprosy, he went on. Here they believed it was a kind of a spirit, too. When a leper died he was not given a good burial. No wakes were held for him. He was given no coffin. He was buried in the Bad Bush, where the sorcerers were thrown.

"When a leper dies, they don't want him to come back again. They don't treat his spirit well. They do the same with him as with a madman. They bury him with no more ceremony than a child, who came on earth, and would not stay. They say it's all because of a bad spirit, and they don't want bad spirits on earth."

"Why do we plant away from the village?"

It was the old woman talking, as we sat and smoked with her. The moon had come up above the maripa palm trees behind the house where the leper had been helped into his hammock, and it was pleasant out-of-doors.

"Why, you ask? Well, sometimes when the bush is burned, a wind comes up suddenly, and sends the flames, down, down, beyond the cleared ground. How would it be with a village, if we cleared our grounds too close to it, and this happened? No, Bak'a, we people of the bush know better. . . . What do you say? Why do we do our clearing

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774 would be more serious yet, an evil spirit who would be
776 lying in wait for a soul to use as emissary in his affairs of
black magic, would snatch at the soul and take it away. If
[53] this happened, a person would sicken, languish, and die.
Sometimes when a man tripped on the clayey bank, we
heard him exclaim, "Ago!—Ancestors!" calling on these to
protect him until he recovered his balance. But often we
[182] heard different cries. "Mi, Awana!" one man had called.
"Mi, Nyamfai!" or, "Mi, Matchau!" or "Mi, Popoto!"
[614] These are all clan names, and for a time we assumed that
instead of appealing to their ancestors, they called on the
entire clan to come to their aid. But one day Sedefo lost his
footing, and we heard him exclaim, "Mi, Fandaki!" Now
we knew that Sedefo belonged to the clan of the Gankwe
people, and we knew, further, that he was most emphati-
cally not of the Fandaki clan.

"Sedefo, you are not a Fandaki. Why did you call on
them?"

"My father belongs to the Fandaki. When we slip we
call on our father's lo."

"Why, Sedefo?"

"I do not know. . . ."

605 Another day we were sitting and talking to a young man
in an upper river village. A girl came and sat with us.
"This is my sister," the man said. It was at a time when
we were looking into these matters, and we asked, "Did
the same mother make you both?"

"No," he answered, "she is here only on a visit. She
lives across the river. Her father is my mother's brother."

"But she is not your sister, then," we said. "She does
not even belong to your clan."

"Massa Neng'e! But she is my sister!" the man pro-
tested. "She is neither of my family, nor of my clan. But
did not my mother's brother make her?"

"Could you marry her?"

[582] He considered for a moment. "It would be possible. But
it would not be good. . . . And the old women in the
village would talk too much."

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"The gods are friendly to you, Massa. The men have all noticed it. You look upon trees and falls with pleasure. When you see them, it is as if you met with a friend. That is good. But the gods have their powers, and men have theirs. The Rabbit says, 'Evil is everywhere.' Last night, you remember, there was a man who did not look up when you passed his house, and when you spoke 'Howdo' to him, he would not answer. He was an obia man. He would not take the hand of a white man. I have heard the men say there are others who are not glad that the white man has come so far, and that the gods have allowed it. . . ."

Abruptly he stopped. He had said more than he intended.

"I came to tell you about another thing," he continued after a moment of embarrassment. "You should know about fio-fio."

● [753]

Fio-fio was a small brown bug, and it was also a spirit. The spirit fio-fio brought sickness and death to human beings. For people like ourselves, untutored in the ways of the spirits, and the things which allowed them to gain sway over an individual, only a diviner could seek out the incident which had caused fio-fio to come.

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That was why it was necessary to bathe in a protecting fluid, to "wash fio-fio," even though we had not yet been stricken.

"Let me tell you how to wash fio-fio," he went on. "You must bathe when nobody sees you, and this is what you must have: the skin of a plantain we call the mother plantain that has been dried in smoke, and weeds which I will give you, and Negro-country pepper which I have with me, and seven pieces of chalk, and some eggshells. Some people put washing-blue in the water, too, but that you don't need. You can bathe in it early in the morning, or at noon, or right after sundown, but no one must see you."

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He paused for a moment.

"Do you not have fio-fio in your country? Look, this is how it is. You quarrel with a man who works for you, and he comes back and says he is sorry, and you say you are

SARAMACCA OBIA

anything made of iron—nor can a gun shoot him, nor an arrow pierce him. If he goes through a thicket of thorns or climbs a thorny palm tree when the spirit comes to him, he is not harmed. That is Kromanti." 432
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"How much does a person pay an obia man for giving a boy Kromanti?" we asked.

"It costs plenty, white man. But a good obia man never asks too much. If a man says he will give the boy Kromanti, for not too many guilders, then we know he will do it. But if a man asks forty, fifty, then we know he is not an honest man, and he is not a good man. I have heard, though, of a good obia man who took as much as twenty-four guilders, but he gave the boy a strong Kromanti spirit, and it took much time to teach him." [433]

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From time to time members of Bayo's family visited our camp. Each time we were introduced to a new brother, or father, or *suwagi*—brother-in-law. Among these visitors was a man whose name we never learned, though we had talked with him a good deal. He was, we later came to know, a man who knew obia. He was a scholar among his people, a thoughtful man who often went about alone, instead of being accompanied by a fellow clan member or a member of his family, as is customary among these people. Like Bayo, he had an incest kunu, and at his age, he had already had occasion to see what kunu planned for him. He coughed badly. When men went to cut timber, he could not go with them because of his cough and the fever which went with the cough. 791
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"Have you been to a good obia man?" we asked him.

He smiled. Of what use to go from one diviner to the next, from one man who had special magic to another, when a man knew that what was troubling him was kunu? [753]

"Come to the city with us," we said, when we knew him better, "and we will take you to a doctor. He may be able to do something for you."

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● 753 He promised readily enough to go with us, but Bayo
789 told us later that he would not come.
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"He says the white doctor cannot do more than obia can do. He says a man must take what kunu brings."

Was there no obia against kunu? we asked of Bayo.

"No, but kunu is not greater than obia. It is something else. When the Sky God gave obia to man, he gave it to help man live, not to help him do bad things. When men and women earn a kunu for their family, it is because they do what is hateful to the great gods and ancestors. Obia was not sent to save men from punishment."

"Does obia never punish, Bayo?" We were thinking of what he said about his own obia, of how when it seized him, he destroyed things.

But he would say no more. "I am too young, Bak'a, to speak of these things. At my age I know only a little obia. You must ask the old men."

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791 The conversation led us one day to the obia men on the river. They were, we knew, important persons in the Bush Negro communities. An obia man of reputation was not only consulted by his own villagers and clansmen, but men and women came to him from distant villages, when those who were nearer had failed them. It occurred sometimes that even from the Awka villages on the lower river, these Saramacca obia men were sought out—perhaps this was because of the same tradition which encouraged the buying of strange gods to enlarge the family pantheon, perhaps it was because of something which touched still deeper beliefs.

868 How did a man become an obia man?

867 From what we had already heard, it was apparent that there was something which approached the formal education of our own civilization, a form of education, indeed, which we pride ourselves is unique to our own way of life.

All other knowledge the Bush Negro child gains by being about with members of his family who are busy at

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When he lies as though dead, except only that his eyes sparkle and are completely turned in their sockets, at which time one frequently sees only the white and red, and he moves his chest panting for breath, then he is carefully brought to the place where the Cromantie gado is put, and where questions are put to him concerning the sickness which one wishes to cure, and where the sick person himself or, in the latter's absence, some of his most recently worn garments, must be.

These questions are put with a great deal of solemnity, and answered by /22/ the person lying there. Very frequently the very strange herbs named on this occasion had favorable results.

When they proceed to such cases, the sufferer is obligated, so long as he is not cured, to continue to use the medicines indicated, which frequently had the result that after all the sick person did finally recuperate after long suffering.

If he in the least way neglects the remedies indicated on this occasion, he may often count on it that for him there is no more help, because he has recklessly called on the Cromantie gado for recovery, without the requisite reverence and observance of the prescriptions.

However this matter may be regarded, it is certainly true that they firmly believe the desired outcome will not fail so long as one does not circumvent or neglect the prescriptions in any way.

It sometimes happens that someone, after his recovery, abstains for his whole life from something or other which was ordered for his recovery. Many assert that the leprosy which they contract is to be ascribed to not paying attention to what was forbidden them or their parents.

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Almost all Bush Negroes have wentie or excitations of the African idolatrous dance-madness, which one must see in order to be able to believe and understand it. They can frequently dance fully five minutes at a stretch in a hot fire, unclothed and barefoot, without burning themselves in the least and without any sign of singeing to be seen on them.

The beliefs of both, attributing illnesses to
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743 supernatural causes, did not predispose them to turn to European
 648 doctors. Moreover, the Saint-Laurent hospital was so far away
 [753] (six days paddling downstream) that a seriously ill person had
 plenty of time to die en route. The Boni went there only as a last
 resource and in general at the point of death. As for the Oayana,
 not a single one presented himself there before 1950.

744 In 1936-1939 several circuits had been made from the post
 648 of La Forestiere located at the mouth of the river, but no consistent
 [743] medical action had been feasible. Not until 1949 was it possible
 to create a medical center in the country itself, at Maripasoula.

744 The populations were visited regularly, and the seriously ill could
 [164] be hospitalized on the spot. At the same time systematic spraying
 with DDT inside all the huts, destroying the anthropophile
 anopheles, changed the environmental conditions considerably;
 if malaria has not disappeared, it has ceased, both among the
 Indians and among the Boni children, to be the principal cause of
 morbidity.

743 The action of the medical center has been exercised more on
 744 the Boni, who live a few hours by canoe from Maripasoula, than on
 648 the Oayana. Among the latter, the principal villages are two days
 [484] journey by motorboat upstream amidst difficult waterfalls; the
 [753] Indians are often on the move, fishing on the upper courses of
 the rivers or visiting their relatives on Brazilian rivers; it has
 happened several times that the circuits of the doctors and medi-
 cal attendants (one per trimester on the average) do not find any-
 body in the villages; incidentally, the Oayana tend to attribute
 all internal ailments to magical causes, consulting willingly only
 [844] for wounds. They willingly accept the remedies given on the
 spot, but rarely take the initiative of moving a sick person to
 Maripasoula; the women continue to have their babies delivered
 in the villages, without any hygiene.

757 Only during the last three or four years has a change in
 165 attitude been noticeable among them vis-à-vis medicine; as we
 shall show below, no notable modification in their mortality has
 yet been observed as a result of this fact.

121 The principal interest of this study being to compare the
 165 demographic data of two populations before they had been modified

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602 to observe all his life and which he himself will transmit to his
784 children. It is unanimously believed that breaking this interdiction
428 causes leprosy (bwasi).
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This interdiction is never transmitted by women. It is transmitted from father to son /33/ or daughter. The son will observe it and transmit it; the daughter will observe it during her lifetime, but she will not transmit it.

602 The existence of the bwasi kina divides the Boni into de
784 facto groupings which can be considered as patrilineages. These patrilineages have no name, no head, no organization; their members are dispersed among the various matrilineages and most of them do not know who the others are.

They exist nevertheless and extend throughout all the tribes of Refugee Blacks.

[582] Their importance in the eyes of the Refugee Blacks comes from the fact that they involve a law of exogamy: a man and a woman who have the same bwasi kina cannot marry; that would be pikadu, incest in the broad sense, an offense against exogamy, as much as the union of two members of the same matrilineage.

[262] It is difficult to estimate the number of these patrilineages,
[598] which seems to us to be at least 20 among the Boni; actually, the Boni do not willingly tell their bwasi kina, for fear that one of their enemies might mix into their food a fragment of the interdicted food in order to harm them; besides, they do not know their paternal relations beyond their grandfather. Reconstitution of patrilineages by interrogation seems therefore to be illusory.

602 The bwasi kina we have been able to find out about are all
784 about food. They involve the cayman, the "tiger," the tortoise,
262 the white hen, the pian (awali), the eel. The cayman is often given in addition to another animal. But it is inaccurate to say that the Refugee Blacks have a general interdiction against the cayman.

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842 If children are born of these irregular liaisons, the mother takes care to know with certainty who the father is, for if there were any doubt, the child, respecting a kina which would not be his own, would contract leprosy. On this subject the Boni have a remarkable belief: they think that it is the first man with whom a woman has had relations after the end of a menstrual period who is likely to make her pregnant.

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431 These adventures always involve gifts in kind (cloth, jewels); so the men who have the most success with women are always short of money.

581 A woman who has lived thus in notorious fashion has a little more difficulty than another in finding another husband, but if she is young and winsome she succeeds.

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[836] Prostitution as such is very rare in Boni country, and the women who give themselves over to it openly (three or four for all the villages on the French bank) have generally left the tribe to settle in the gold miners' villages. Dissoluteness is not considered dishonorable by the Refugee Blacks when it is carried on within the tribe and when it has no other purpose but pleasure; but prostitution is judged shameful.

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648 Except for these few prostitutes, we have never heard it said that a Boni woman had relations with a European; on this point tribal discipline is observed with extreme rigor.

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[178] Conclusion. The average duration of marriages, which was from 15 to 20 years for the preceding generation, tends to become shorter and can be estimated nowadays at about ten years.

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548 In spite of this evolution, the stability of marriages among the Refugee Blacks remains noticeably greater than that observed among the black populations of South America. Among them is not seen the form of prostitution so widespread in South America, the supported mistress who does not work and who lives entirely at the expense of her successive lovers.

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can read these messages; but we have not turned up any precise evidence on this subject (1).

1. These signs are very little systematized and have no relation whatever with the symbolic designs which figure in certain rituals of possession, especially in Dahomey and Haiti. It is permitted to see in them a simple likeness.

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The Papa gadu are chiefly consulted to ask them to reveal the cause of misfortunes that happen. One of them is not asked to cure an illness unless the interrogation reveals that it brought it on.

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The worship of the Papa gadu snake gods makes a strong impression on the West Indian Creoles who maintain regular relations with the Refugee Blacks. Most consider it as diabolical in nature and disapprove of it, but if the presence of an "adder" (anaconda snake) is noted in a neighboring creek, and if at the same time misfortunes occur, it happens that a Creole may go to ask the Refugee Blacks to practice rites to mollify the vengeance of the god. We have happened to catch sight of, hidden in a copse behind the habitation of a gold miner, a small altar decorated with blue and red pennants, the usual place of worship of the Papa gadu.

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Observation in Boniville, November, 1952.

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An Asisi woman, Tini, comes to Boniville to consult her adoptive daughter Pamasa, about 35 years old, who is possessed by a Papa gadu named Adawa. Féni, 15 years old, Tini's son, has been sick for several days (fever, eruption all over the body). When someone comes to get us, the god has already entered into Pamasa, has sat down in a hut, and

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is answering in ordinary language the questions posed. The sick boy's mother asks the god if it is really he who made her son ill. He answers that it is he and gives two reasons: first, a week before, Féni damaged with a blow of the machete the root of a silk-cotton tree in which precisely he himself was living; moreover, his sister Pamasa was sick for 15 days, he did not go to visit her.

The mother begs the god: "Ubegi yu, yu abi leti, gi ɛŋ paadʒ, a 'ā be sabi bŋ-bŋ. (We beg you, you are right (but) pardon him, he had not realized well /what he did/.)"

Then the god directs a treatment: an infusion of a certain number of leaves, with which the sick boy will wash his body. It states that the sick boy will quickly get well.

Pamasa then comes back to her ordinary state. The scene has lasted about three-quarters of an hour in all.

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Observation in Asisi, October, 1956.

On October 21 at 8 o'clock I am told that Bugi, a woman of about 45, is gravely ill; she suffers from violent pains in the chest and a general tremor. The sick woman is stretched out on the ground, supported by her brother and surrounded by old women who are comforting her. She appears to suffer atrociously, her body is covered with sweat, her lower limbs are agitated with an incessant trembling; she presents the symptoms of a heart attack (2). In front of the house, the ɔbiaman are

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2. Bugi had already been hospitalized in Maripasoula for a heart attack.

preparing a "remedy," /213/ for they suspect that this is a question of a manifestation of the Papa gadu of which Bugi is the bearer.

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755 A stalk of sangaafu twice bent in an elbow is arranged on the ground. A cross is traced in the dirt.

Centered on the cross is placed a large basin into which is poured infusions of leaves taken from several calabashes.

The sick woman, still prostrate and groaning, is seated on a stool facing the basin. The contents of the basin are poured slowly over her body while she is massaged. It is not a question of a remedy in the literal sense of the word; the sick one is "washed" to help the god to manifest itself in her.

I notice that while going back into the hut she trembles almost no more; the attack seems to be subsiding.

[787] In the meanwhile someone comes to call me elsewhere and I cannot come back until half an hour later. I find the sick woman standing, smeared with pamba, in the middle of a meditative audience. The god has descended into her and is expressing itself in Papa language while she dances with slow gestures.

• [753] I am told that it has just given the explanation of the illness: it struck Bugi because she did not observe the kina given to all bearers of Papa gadu, to stay away from funeral ceremonies. [784] Now, the day before yesterday, she had knowingly participated in the tukka dance around Kotoïda's coffin.

The Obiaman present beg the god to pardon, which it does after claiming a bottle of beer which it drinks through the mouth of its bearer.

152 Observation in Kormotibo, December 18, 1957.

164 On December 18 in the evening I find the village of
753 Kormotibo in the clutches of terror. Several persons are sick
784 from the effect of the kunu. Apaita, a young woman, has an enormous whitlow, following an accident; two women have been stricken with pneumonia.

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753 These misfortunes are attributed to the kunu exercised
784 by a Papa gadu god, since about a hundred years ago an
ancestress named Akonté involuntarily killed a dagwe snake
[787] while fishing /nivrant/ a creek. In our day this god manifests
itself in Alama (Dip. II, E1), and another Papa gadu, which
says it is the descendant of the first, manifests itself in Apaita
[755] (F9). It is the latter which, speaking through the mouth of
Apaita, revealed that it was striking the village because nobody
had danced for it for five years.

755 They called B... obiaman specialized in the voodu
cult. He surrounded the chapel of the Papa gadu with stalks
[787] of sagaafu placed vertically. He prepared an infusion of
leaves with which the Kormotibo women who have a Papa gadu
have just smeared themselves (they are four in number, in-
cluding two outsiders to the Dipélu II lineage). It is a question
of helping their gods to manifest themselves.

People are going to dance eight nights running, part of
the night. The agida drum drawn out of the chapel is set up
in working position. /214/

The rites carried out to neutralize the kunu are:

- Cleaning of the chapel;
- Decoration by means of stalks of sagaafu placed up-
right all around /it/;
- Bathing of the sick with leaves believed to have the
power of making the influence of the Papa gadu go away;
- With other leaves, on the contrary concentrating the
maleficent influence of the Papa gadu in a calabash which is
then carefully shut up in the chapel.

787 Possession by the Ampuku. It is much more rare, and personally
we have observed it only twice; the possessed people make
circles of penba around their eyes and draw kinds of ovals on

[774] /216 cont. / The akka is an immortal divine element
[775] attached to a human person for the duration of his life and
which, at his death, returns to the domain of the divine, no
longer keeping any contact with men.

[828] The akka is the source of life from which the human
personality is nourished, but it is not this personality.

The Refugee Blacks consider the akka as a personal pro-
tector god; they are apt to say mi gadu, my god, for mi akka.

The concept of the akka was spontaneously transposed
by the West Indians into that of the guardian angel. They speak
in Haiti of the "big good angel."

For Refugee Blacks the life, health, and destiny of a man
depend above all on the akka; they think that if the akka went
away, the body and mind of the man could not remain bound
together; he would die or lose consciousness. This is, a little,
what happens each night, for they believe that the akka leaves
the body to wander, which brings on the loss of consciousness.

[754] /217/ So the wisimā, the sorcerer, tries to profit by this to
capture the akka so that the man may become insane.

The akka is thought to have tastes, desires, and goals
foreign to those of the personality and of which the man, in his
ordinary consciousness, has no knowledge. The akka can make
the man sick if he behaves in a way that it does not like. So

[753] when someone is sick, he resorts to divination in order to know
[755] whether it is not the deed of the akka and, in the affirmative,
for what motive. One might think that the akka behaves like
a conscience in the moral sense of the term; that it gets angry
if its bearer does something evil. But in reality the akka shows
itself to be as arbitrary, wicked, and venal as the lower gods
of the Refugee Blacks. If it gets angry (they say: mi akka
māndi), this is because its bearer wears clothes of a color it
does not like, or because it wants an offering. We have never,
on the other hand, heard a case spoken of in which the akka
might have become angry with its bearer because he was a
thief, liar, or adulterer.

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775 "My nēmseki is So-and-So." Mr. W. F. van Lier, speaking of
828 the Djuka who have much clearer conceptions on religious
[184] questions, gives an important clarification: in 1915 Grand Man
Osēisi became incarnate in a newborn baby of the tribe, never-
theless he continues to be invoked as an ancestor before the
fraga tiki. It seems, then, that it is a case of certain elements
of the personality which are believed to be reincarnated, and
not of the yorka as a whole.

787 It is important to distinguish the nēmseki from possession
by a yorka. Possession by a yorka is an exceptional occurrence
which is manifested in the form of trances, the yorka speaking
through the mouth of its bearer; outside of these possessions,
this yorka is believed to reside in the abode of the ancestors.

[613] A yorka can reveal itself thus only in a person of its
matrilineage.

775 The nēmseki, on the contrary, exists in all men. The
828 ancestor who is thus partially reincarnated is generally on the
paternal side, but this is not an absolute rule.

A man is not conscious of his nēmseki and is acquainted
with it only because his parents have revealed it to him. This
nēmseki does not manifest itself in anything in everyday life;
it does not impose any kina whatever and does not ask for
offerings. However, when a young child falls ill, divination
may reveal that it is the doing of the nēmseki which is indignant
[753] at being misunderstood. People hurry then, always with the
[755] help of divination, to find out the name of the nēmseki,
proceeding by elimination. As a general rule, they allow
themselves to be guided by resemblances of physiognomy,
birthmarks calling to mind, for example, certain scars of the
dead ancestor.

It is believed that the older a man is when he dies, the
more time he will allow to elapse before being reincarnated.

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Relations between Gods and Men

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The kumu

• [1953]
[1961]

The kumu. The Refugee Blacks call kumu the collective curse which has weighed on a matrilineage since an ancient offense. The kumu is without time limit, without pardon, without pity, blind in the choice of its victims; in principle, it can end only with the complete extermination of the lineage. Each time that adversity swoops down on one of its members in the form of death, sickness, various calamities, the kumu is the most frequently obtained explanation. The instrument of this inexorable vengeance is either a god or the yorba (spirit) of a dead person.

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This notion, which occupies a central position in the beliefs of the Refugee Blacks, does not appear to have been borrowed directly. Most of the populations of Dahomey 1221 and the Ivory Coast take for granted the idea of arbitrary punishments exercised upon the members of the lineage by the gods or the ancestors of the group. But no population of these regions has, to our knowledge, developed so highly systematized a doctrine.

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The conceptions developed by the Refugee Blacks, divinities impelled exclusively by vengeance, and especially ancestors inexorably chastising lineages other than their own, have created new relationships among individuals and among lineages.

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We have not been able to elucidate the origin of the word kumu. Perhaps it is a deformation of the Mina word ekumu, which means burial.

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Three categories of divinities can pursue men with their kumu, and because of this fact the Refugee Blacks feel toward them an extreme terror mixed with veneration.

/223 cont./

784 One sees from this example how the influence of women,
613 exerted in arbitrary fashion, in a domain placed outside of
782 custom and ordinary social life, weighs on the life of the
522 group.

27 Kumu of the Dipélu lineage. The situation of the Dipélu
619 lineage with respect to the kumu is particularly interesting.
571 Although split for perhaps 100 years into two separate groups,
Dipélu I (L'Enfant Perdu and Apatu villages) and Dipélu II
(Kormotibo and Asisi-Dip. II villages), this group still constitutes
an undivided unit with respect to the kumu. Neither time nor
(184) distance (it takes more than a week of traveling to make the
round trip between L'Enfant Perdu and Apatu) has been able to
(155) break it up. The Apatu people come very often (at least some
of them) to be present at the collective prayers which take
place at L'Enfant Perdu to appease a kumu in order to cure a
sick person.

27 The oldest kumu ("since Africa") is that of a Papa gadu
614 god whose lover was O Dika' (Dip. I. D10, † 1951) and which
226 passed after her death into O Pééchina (Dip. I. E42, L'Enfant
(187) Perdu village). This kumu strikes indiscriminately the people
of L'Enfant Perdu, Apatu, Kormotibo, Asisi-Dip. II, and the
Dipélu fraction residing in Bonville. To it, these past years,
(161) have been attributed the death of O Way (Dip. I. E6, living
(153) in Bonville), the illness of Δ Ahwali (Dip. II. F7, Kormotibo
village) and of O Bongo (same village).

27 Another very old kumu is the one exercised by the yaka
775 of a Surinam Creole who had settled with the Dipélu people a
619 very long time ago. He was suspected of sorcery and killed.
(142) Since then his yaka comes back regularly to exterminate the
Dipélu.

/225 cont. /

284 Having no known lineage (his family, if he had any, was
285 in Surinam), it had taken people of the Dipélu lineage as
614 bearers. The last was Δ Denis † in 1938. Since Denis'
287 death, it no longer has a bearer. The questioning of the dead
reveals that they died by its kunu. The members of the two
[182] fractions of the lineage meet together (at least two or three
members of each village come) to supplicate it.

284 A third kunu, very interesting in origin and supposed
614 action, /226/ in 1957 was borne by Kwau (Dip. I, E1, Kotika
village). It results from the killing of an anaconda snake by
Apatu † (Dip. I, C1), companion of the explorer Crevaux
when he was traveling to /in/ Brazil. Upon contact with
Europeans Apatu had become a freethinker and was no longer
observing the laws of his people. Among the later victims of
[153] this kunu was counted Kwami (Dip. II, F4, Kormotibo village)
[155] who, gravely ill, had had to go to L'Enfant Perdu where the
god had been invoked for him and offerings made. The death
[161] of Manga (Dip. I, E5, Boniville, † about 1930) was particu-
larly attributed to it.

No other kunu has revealed itself in Apatu village since
its founding in 1882.

284 A fourth kunu concerning all the Dipélu has as bearers
614 women of the Dipélu II-group. It results from the inadvertent
706 murder of a Papa gadu whose bearer was a dagowe snake killed
787 in the course of the nivrée /fishing/ of a pool by Akonté
522 † (Dip. II, B1), transmitted to Kondo †, then to Alama
(Dip. II, E1).

Since then Papa gadu have revealed themselves in

○ Apaíta (Dip. II, F9, Kormotibo village) and in ○ Kaala
(Dip. II, G28, Asisi-Dip. II village). They declared them-
selves to be the descendants of the first and to come in support
of it.

/227 cont. /

784 --A second, very old kunu is exercised by a yarka of the
 775 Dipélu II lo, Gy...., dead so long that he cannot be placed on
 777 the genealogical table; it, too, had as bearer a member of the
 619 lineage on which it was exercising the kunu. O Akumuyé
 614 (Aw.B.1, D17) † 1957.

Thus the Awara Bakka and Dipélu lineages exercise the kunu reciprocally one against the other;

784 --A third kunu of recent origin is exercised by a Papa
 786 gadu god which had as bearer in 1957 O Irma (Aw.B.1, E37).
 613 It results from the inadvertent killing of a Dagowe /sic/ snake
 789 by O Takwa, Irma's brother. At the end of 1957 this kunu
 753 had yet brought on only illnesses of such a kind that people
 could still hope to exorcise it.

784 The Aw.B.3 group has a special kunu of its own and
 613 considers itself one of each of the kunu of the Aw.B.1.

Anèta, originating in the Djuka village of Tabiki, is
 subject to the kunu of that lineage as are all her descendants in
 782 uterine line. On occasion of serious illnesses the latter have
 sometimes had to go to Tabiki village to supplicate the kunu.

786 This kunu is the one of a god borne by Akanté, Anèta's
 787 daughter. In September, 1956, Summa, Akanté's daughter,
 782 was sick. The god revealed that this was its doing. It was
 supplicated (the other fractions joined the group) and she then
 got well.

613 Kunu of the Afi lineage. The descendants of Afi † (woman
 621 coming from the tribe of the Bakabuchi of Surinam) live for the
 most part in Asisi in close symbiosis with the /228/ Awara-
 Bakka lineage. They are in a situation analogous to that of
 Anèta's descendants (Aw.B.3) but, perhaps by the simple fact
 of their number, they form a more individualized unit.

/231 cont. /

776 which people do not hesitate to come to ask for remedies or
787 opinions, in spite of the evil they have done to the lineage and
perhaps will do tomorrow. It is even allowable to wonder
whether people do not prefer to consult the most wicked
divinities, for they are believed to be stronger.

784 The kunu focuses, turns aside toward high purposes the
791 blind forces of superstition, fear, and rancor. Several authors
114 who have written on the Refugee Blacks have stated that
754 calamities were almost unfailingly attributed to sorcery (wisi).

This is a grave error due to the fact that they believed they
could transpose to the Refugee Blacks what is observed among
the Creole populations of Surinam. If this were true, no

[787] positive social bond could exist. We believe we can assert
that among the Refugee Blacks divination lays the blame on
sorcery in only scarcely a tenth of the misfortunes. Here,

784 among other examples, are several typical cases concerning
[114] Boni who worked with us or whom we have known especially
well:

[753] --In 1948, Fintiman (Dju) falls ill (violent pains in the
[776] legs); kunu of a Kintamani.

[752] --In 1948, Galmo (Papaiston) is accidentally hurt (gun
backfire): kunu.

[753] --In 1949, Diolè, captain of the Dju lo, is smitten with
[761] hemiplegia and remains paralyzed. He dies in 1951: kunu
[776] of a Papa gadu.

761 --In 1950, a Saramaka is killed in a hunting accident
(a gun in poor condition went off by itself): 3g 2ku (accident).

[754] --In 1951, Kanayen (Kotika) drowns while sailing at
night on the river: wisi.

[754] --In 1951, Loka (Dju) dies at the age of 70: kunu of an
[776] Ampuku.

752 --In 1951, F... (Dju) is seriously hurt by the falling of
284 a branch while cutting his clearing: kunu of a yarka.
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/231 cont./

--In 1952, Dolo (Awara Bakka) dies almost all of a sudden with the symptoms of peritonitis: kunu, punishment for incest committed by another member of the lineage.

--In 1952, Maïndo, ten years old, son of Osaya (Awara Bakka) accidentally drowns: natural accident (39gɔɔku).

--In 1954, Béniti (Dju) dies at nearly 75 years of age: kunu of a Papa gadu.

--In 1954, Agyémési (Aw.B.) dies almost all of a sudden: killed by Odun (he was a wisimɛ).

--In 1955, Tabiki (Awara Bakka) dies at over 80: natural illness.

--In 1955, Kotoida /sic/ (Afi lineage) dies suddenly, aged about 50: kunu of a yɔrka.

--In 1957, F... (Lapé) is gravely ill with symptoms of typhoid: kunu of a Papa gadu.

--In 1957, Sokodo (Dip. II) dies at 40: kunu of a Kɛntamasu.

/232/ One observes that in the 15 cases cited here, the kunu interferes ten times, while in three cases natural causes: illness, accident, were assumed.

In reality, the Refugee Blacks do not have the conception of a natural world, subject to known or knowable laws, which is set against a supernatural world. The intervention of a Papa gadu is neither more nor less natural than an illness or an accident. There is only, on the plane of human life, more or less frequent intervention by suprahuman forces.

The intervention of these forces is made according to laws which embrace the totality of beings and things, laws which men cannot understand but of which they believe they have a partial and empirical knowledge.

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It is important not to confuse the kunu with the sufferings which other divinities can arbitrarily make men undergo. The kunu has a systematic character. But a divinity theoretically beneficent, and which has come into a man after being called on, may also from time to time bring misfortunes if such is its whim of the moment.

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In 1949, G... (Dju) was busy cooking a crab in the house of his mother D... A machete which was fastened to the wall suddenly detached itself and wounded him in the right hand. Now his mother had an Ampuku which had imposed the crab on her as kina. This Ampuku, immediately called on, revealed that it really was it which had struck G..., for it did not like to see D... 's son eat crab (note that G... was not at all held to the observance of this kina, for no kina is transmitted from mother to son).

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Neither must the kunu exercised by a yarka be confused with the vengeance that a dead person can exercise against the members of his own lineage in order to punish them for having neglected their duties.

Punishment inflicted by an ancestor of the lineage seems for the Boni to be a notion distinct from that of the kunu. Vengeance exercised by a yarka upon its own lineage is regarded as exceptional and devoid of the inexorable and definitive character of the kunu, but they assume it to be possible. They cited to us the case of Yali (Loka), who committed suicide when accused of sorcery by the people of his lineage. Since then, his yarka has caused sicknesses and deaths in his own village.

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Conversely, a god which exercises the kunu upon a lineage may in certain cases intervene in favor of this lineage if such is its whim of the moment. Thus the death of Diamanti (Aw.B.2, Asisi village, † in 1955) is attributed to the god which exercises the kunu on the village of L'Enfant Perdu and whose bearer was Péechina. Diamanti had wronged someone of this village and the god had intervened against her.

/253 cont. /

Various Beliefs

578 Fyo-fyo. If a Boni is on bad terms with someone of his lineage or of another lineage, he has the absolute right to turn a cold shoulder to him and stop having anything to do with him. But if, hiding his rancor, he seeks, from selfish motives, to maintain the appearance of friendly relations, he risks falling ill, being struck by various calamities, or even dying from the effect of what the Refugee Blacks call a fyo-fyo. The nature of this force is not clear; they know only that its support is a small, common insect named fyo-fyo. They declare that if a person dies from the consequences of a fyo-fyo, one of these insects will be seen leaving his body through the nose at the moment of death.

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[775] Taku sani. By this name the Refugee Blacks designate maleficent entities of the bush, which they imagine as of nonhuman nature by contrast to the taku yarka, wandering spirits of dead people rejected by society. These entities are lower beings devoid of consciousness but dangerous for men into whom they may enter, rendering them sick or mad. Certain of these entities are believed to reside in plants, like the kotkoti, others are thought to take on the appearance of dwarfs (baku), whom certain people believe they sometimes see at dawn on the outskirts of villages.

751 One protects oneself against taku sani by special obia, and those who do not feel completely secure take a certain number of precautions in addition, like that of tearing up the leaves they have used for drinking water from creeks.

/253 cont. /

751 / Tyifunga (1). This is the name of the magic enclosures made
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(824)

1. They also use the word azig, borrowed from the Fon of Dahomey.

of shoots / "tongues" / of pinot palm, pina tango, attached to a string, with which on certain occasions a village is completely surrounded. These enclosures are thought to bar the passage of the evil spirits of the bush (taku sani); they are put up especially in the case of an epidemic, as well as before the great festivals which attract a crowd of persons among whom wisimā can slip in. After putting the enclosure in place, people arrange themselves in a line at one end of the village and move along slowly so as to sweep its whole surface, firing guns, making all the noise possible by striking metallic objects and striking the ground with reeds to expel the evil spirits. This is what is called naki tyifunga. The elders repeat the formula: "U naki tyifunga fu agi na: mu ku a so (We strike tyifunga so that the evil (spirits) may not be able to come to earth)."

The magic fence is then left in place until it is rotten.

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Beliefs about leprosy. Lepers are buried at the limits of the cemetery, but they are not considered cursed, and mourning for them is carried out normally.

/254/ They take for granted that if someone is attacked by leprosy, it is because he has "broken" his bwasī kina. They think that an enemy can, because of ill will, hide a bit of the forbidden fare in the food. This is why the Boni do not willingly tell one another their interdictions.

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Obiaman who treats a wound made by a firearm to observe chastity during the whole duration of the treatment. It is for this reason that the Boni hesitate to have gunshot wounds cared for in hospitals.

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[262] Kina. The interdictions of the Refugee Blacks generally have to do with food. There are five categories of them to our knowledge:

• [753] --Bwasi kina, basic kina, mark of patrilineages, the breaking of which gives leprosy;

--Akka kina, often called gadu kina, established by divination and believed to be imposed by the akka;

--Gadu kina, mark of possession by a divinity;

--Obia kina, interdiction attached to each object involving a magic power, and which must be observed for this power to last;

--Finally, local kina, particularly the kina de, days of rest, going back to the idea of the day of rest of the local divinity. They observe, for example, that the Mana River has a kina de on Sunday. The Saramaka observe it strictly. The Boni we took on the Mana in 1949 went to find out from the Saramaka, and asked us to stop navigation on Sunday,

[648] for this kina was very urgent. It is noteworthy however that the Boni bow in such circumstances before the will of the Europeans, as with respect to their own kina de of Friday; in effect they are assuming that if they are ordered to be on duty, it is the European alone who bears the responsibility for breaking the kina.

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[613] It is possible that the kina alluded to by Mr. W. F. Van Lier and which, among the Djuka, would be imposed on a whole matrilineage are also local kina; in any case no kina is transmissible through the mother, all the Refugee Blacks are explicit on that point.

/256 cont. /

845 When twins die young people almost always blame a
961 disagreement which has arisen in the lineage. The twins
578 did not want to live in a disunited family. The head of the
613 lineage then exhorts his people to be reconciled with one
another at any cost in order to avoid new misfortunes (1).

• [153]

1. In general they have the idea that dimensions occurring in the lineage have as a consequence illnesses or misfortunes striking the members of the lineage. This notion plays a major role in the social life of the Refugee Blacks; after the kunu, it is the principle cement holding groups together.

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845 One who harms a twin is sure to fall ill. Conversely,
798 it is assumed that the twin must not abuse his power, that he must lead an upright life and avoid quarrels. He is nearer to God than other men.

They assume for example that Efa, of Papalston village, herself a twin and the mother of twins, has a very special power. Nobody would risk harming her.

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In lineages having many twins there exists a place of worship sacred to a vital principle called Twilenge. The nature of this principle is not clear. The Boni define it as the soul of twins. Is it a matter of the first twins Adam and Eve? Or of a collective worship offered up to all deceased twins?

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This worship is celebrated each time there is occasion to protect newborn babies. They are washed with a certain decoction of leaves.

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Every four or five years on the average a big dance takes place, then the father and mother of twins and the twins themselves are washed in order to maintain their powers and keep them in good health.

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If these dances are not held, dead twins will show their anger by making living twins and parents of twins sick.

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Lineages that do not have twins do not practice these rites. If twins are born to them, they will apply at the place of worship of another lineage.

Papaiston and Lapé have this cult particularly highly developed.

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Tone pikin. It is assumed that a woman may be made pregnant by a river god, either a Papa gadu snake god or by the Wata lagi, which look like Indians. Children thus conceived are called tone pikin.

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A... of Papaiston, had cut a clearing opposite a remarkable white rock called Weti st3, where she used to moor her boat. She had not had any children for several years and she became pregnant. When her daughter was born a possessed person revealed that she was born of a Papa gadu snake god which lived there: since then her parents /relatives/ go regularly to this rock to make offerings.

About 1910 Alama (Kormotibo) had followed her husband to a shipyard on the lower river; one day while walking in the forest she met an Indian having the appearance of a Galibi Indian, who was carrying a newborn baby. She stopped and admired the baby. The Indian said to her: "Do you wish to raise him?" She acquiesced. He said: "We shall see each other again"; then he went away so quickly that she had the impression that he had disappeared on the spot.

/291 cont. /

157 Wishing to take advantage of all the possibilities which
464 turn up, the Refugee Blacks are led to learn simultaneously the
463 traditional techniques of their group, boating, boat-building,
felling of trees, squaring of wood, and /building/ framework.
In these techniques they may be considered specialized workers.

157 Proud of their strength and knowledge, sure of themselves,
812 the Refugee Blacks are never worried about the future and con-
sider life as an exciting adventure, ceaselessly bringing new
things. If the past year has been bad, the new year will be
better, with God's help. Nobody doubts that he will find gain-
ful work again.

152 Influence of jealousy: absence of specialized professions and
182 trade. Another strong psychological tendency having a direct
influence on the economy is jealousy.

152 The effect of jealousy, and the fear of jealousy, is to
828 limit enrichment and to maintain a de facto equality: it often
556 happens that talented people forego undertaking profitable work
753 in order not to give occasion for the jealousy which would render
777 their position in the village difficult and might draw misfortunes
upon them; for people have the idea that jealousy draws down
illnesses and calamities upon him who is the object of it and
on his near relatives, by the action of a natural force, even
without sorcery being formulated.

754 Fear of sorcery interferes in the same way; one who be-
556 comes unusually rich is almost inevitably accused of being a
441 sorcerer and may be obliged to leave the country. Particularly
829 vulnerable are those, very rare, who engage in trade. People
do not suspect of sorcery a man who is seen to become rich by
/292/ working ceaselessly. But the trader whose wealth in-
creases without his furnishing obvious work, is quickly regarded
as a "committed one," accused of having his good luck as a
result of a pact with the devil.

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648 Never do they appeal to the courts to settle their differences, still less their family quarrels; never do they beg for help.

829 The Europeans' material superiority does not impress them: the whites are more able in mechanics, but they are more able

[198] in magic, that is all. The efficacy of European medicine does not shake their convictions: if someone has reasons to believe himself victim of the anger of a gadu, he begins by making the sacrifices intended to appease it, then asks for authorization

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[753] to have himself cared for by the whites. Personally we have never done anything to disabuse the Boni of this idea which satisfies at the same time the requirements of medicine and those of social discipline, for it must not be forgotten that for them

177 sickness is punishment for an offense. Thus one sees that unless it is deliberately brought to bear against tradition and against the leaders, the influence of Europeans is without appreciable effect on the civilization of the Refugee Blacks. It is no longer the same when contacts become too frequent, tend to alter drastically the way of life, and especially when these influences become openly "civilizing."

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The Future of the Refugee Blacks

648 Obligated to solve all the problems of life by their own means, the Refugee Blacks have been able to adapt with intelligence to the evolution of the modern world, and their custom has kept all its vigor and effectiveness. Their future would not seem to be threatened if a wave of opinion had not come to the surface these past years, in French Guiana as well as in Surinam, to destroy their civilization, deemed primitive and barbarous, and to fuse them into the population of the coast. This result would be obtained in particular by schooling and evangelization.